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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001425

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

G/IWI for Andrea Bottner
IIP/P for EHart

1E. O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KWMN PREL KPAO PHUM OPPI SCUL PL

SUBJECT: Poland - 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

REF: (A) STATE 104830, (B) STATE 125694

11. (U) Summary. Mission Poland actively participated in the 2008 international campaign "16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence" by raising awareness of the problem through a series of profiles posted on Embassy Warsaw's website of individuals and institutions actively working against gender-based violence in Poland. The campaign culminated in a DCM-hosted lunch, which celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and furthered the development of a women's rights network in Poland. End Summary.

12. (U) U.S. Embassy sponsored a campaign to raise awareness of the problem of violence against women in Poland. The campaign began on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Ref A), and concluded on December 10, the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ref B). Embassy Warsaw and Consulate Krakow collectively assembled a list of individuals who are active in combating gender-based violence in Poland, including national government officials, artists, NGOs leaders, and academics, and invited them to respond to five specific questions. Based on their responses, we posted the profile of a different activist each day at the top of the Embassy website during the "16 Days" campaign. The results are fascinating individual profiles and a collective snap shot of the contemporary situation of women in Poland, what has been done, and their hopes for the future.

13. (U) Our campaign culminated with a DCM-hosted lunch on December 10, to correspond with the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as a way of emphasizing that human rights are women's rights. The gathering included a lively discussion among some of the individuals profiled and representatives of their organizations. The lunch was also attended by editors from Poland's leading newspapers Rzeczpospolita and Gazeta Wyborcza's Wysokie Obsacy (a weekly section on women's issues).

14. (U) The 16 individuals and institutions profiled were as follows:

Day 1: Manuela Gretkowska, Writer and founder of the Women's Party

Day 2: Renata Durda, Head of the National Emergency Center for Victims of Domestic Violence, also known as "Blue Line"

Day 3: Malgorzata Tarasiewicz, Director of the NEWW Association (Network of East-West Women) in Gdansk

Day 4: Monika Ksieniewicz, Coordinator for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy's Department of Women, Family and Combating Discrimination

Day 5: Marta Lewandowska, Chairperson of OPTA Association

Day 6: Iwona Wisniewska, Director of the Center for Victims of

Violence in Krakow

Day 7: Joanna Piotrowska, President of Feminoteka Foundation

Day 8: Agata Zakrzewska, Director of Women's Right Center in Lodz

Day 9: Dorota Krzyszton, Coordinator for the Ombudsman's program of Assistance for Victims of Violence

Day 10: Stana Buchowska, Director and Co-Founder of LaStrada, Poland

Day 11: Grazyna Pisarczyk, Head of Specialist Center for Victims of Domestic Violence in Kielce

Day 12: Joanna Szurlej, President of "Our Chance" Association of Bieszczady Women and the Director of the Specialized Support Center "SOS" in Lesko for victims of domestic violence

Day 13: Beata Gruszczynska, Criminologist, University of Warsaw, Coordinator of the International Violence against Women Survey (IVAWS) in Poland

Day 14: Beata Kozak, Editor in chief of feminist magazine Zadra and a member of eFKA Women's Foundation in Krakow

Day 15: Urszula Nowakowska, Chairperson of Women's Rights Center

Day 16: Janina Ochojska, President and Founder of the Polish Humanitarian Organization (PHO)

Their "profiles" and response can be accessed on Embassy Warsaw's webpage at the following address:

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<http://poland.usembassy.gov/embassy-events/violence-against-women---16-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violence.html>

15. (SBU) Comment: Violence against women is a serious problem in Poland and there are a number of NGOs who are actively engaged in the struggle to treat victims of violence and prevent further acts of violence against women. Some of the names of the organizations who participated in our campaign are very well-known in Poland. Nevertheless, there is currently not a unified approach or forum for addressing this issue among the diverse NGOs and government bodies. Most of the representatives who gathered at the DCM-hosted lunch did not know each other personally yet. We forged a virtual community of activists through the 16 profiles, which was followed by the personal contact at the lunch. We predict that this network development among the individuals and institutions will be the most long-lasting benefit of the campaign.

16. (U) The issues that women in Poland are struggling against are not unique. In order to have an even broader impact, Mission Poland recommends that IIP make the profiles available to other Eastern Partnership countries in their own languages. These honest portraits from Poland may be an inspiration to activists and institutions in neighboring countries to face their own problem with violence against women with the same candor. End Comment.

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